



Interurban Transit Partnership

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**Testimony by Jennifer Kalczuk
Manager, Communications and External Relations
Michigan House Transportation Committee
HB 4555
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Good morning Chairman LaJoy and members of the Committee. My name is Jennifer Kalczuk and I am the manager of communications and external relations for *The Rapid*, the public transportation system serving the greater Grand Rapids metro area. I am pleased to be here to support efforts to dedicate non-motorized funds to building sidewalks. Sidewalks are an integral part of the transportation network. A ridership survey conducted earlier this spring shows that 73 percent of riders on our system walk to and from the bus line. Our riders depend on *The Rapid* to get them where they need to go, and in turn depend on sidewalks to get them to *The Rapid*.

This is true for all riders, but especially those with mobility impairments. Not having sidewalks can severely limit a person's access to our buses. We often get complaints from riders about having to traverse uneven ground or stand in knee-deep grass at bus stops. Unfortunately, in many of these instances, the only alternative is not to service those locations—a lack of sidewalks means moving the stop will not improve the situation.

Under federal ADA law, we are required to provide paratransit services for those people whose disability prevents them from accessing the fixed-route system. This includes being able to access the point of entry to the system, the bus stops. All *Rapid* buses are lift-equipped and wheel-chair accessible. We have a number of clients that can—and do—ride the fixed route buses, but because a certain stop or location is inaccessible, we have to transport them on the paratransit service. Paratransit services require advance reservations, and generally take longer than a comparable bus trip. This makes a paratransit trip much less flexible and requires much more advance planning than using the fixed-route.

There are also significant budget implications. The average cost per ride of a paratransit trip is \$16.90. This is compared to the average trip cost of \$2.45 on the fixed route. In these difficult times, it makes sense to provide an environment that allows people to use the more cost-effective fixed route transportation, especially when using fixed-route also offers the rider more independence and freedom than paratransit can.

Sidewalks provide a means of safe passage and connection that is imperative for our communities. As both a public transportation provider and the mother of two small children who can often be seen pushing a double stroller, I encourage you to support the development of the sidewalk network.

Attachments: examples of bus stops without sidewalks in the greater Grand Rapids area.

